

Office Action dated March 30, 2004

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 2, 4-8 and 10-19 are currently being prosecuted. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his rejections in view of the amendments and remarks as set forth below.

Entry of the Amendment

It is respectfully requested that the present Amendment should be entered into the official file in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance. In particular, Applicant has rewritten claims indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicant submits that all of the claims are now in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

It is respectfully acknowledged that the Examiner considered the subject matter of claims 4, 8, 10 and 15 as being allowable if rewritten in independent form and the subject matter of claim 12 was being allowable. Although not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejections, claims 4, 8 and 10 have been rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, all the claims are now in condition for allowance.

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Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner is respectfully requested to acknowledge the Information Disclosure Statement filed on February 18, 2004. An initialed copy of the PTO-1449 form should be sent to the undersigned at the earliest convenience of the Examiner.

Applicant's Understanding of the Action

Applicant disagrees with the information provided on the Office Action Summary of the present Action. The Examiner points out that claims 1-20 are pending in the application and that Claim 3 is withdrawn from consideration. Actually, Applicant submits that Claim 3 has been cancelled so that the pending claims are 1, 2, 4-20.

Also, in the body of the Action, the Examiner stated that Claims 6, 7 and 11, 13, 14, 17 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Stein et al. Applicant believes that this rejection should be over Stein et al. in view of Brown, since these claims depend from claims 1 and 9, which were rejected over this combination of references. The present response is based on this understanding of the action.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 2, 5, 9, 16, 18 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Stein et al. in view of Brown. Claims 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 17 and

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20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Stein et al. (presumably in view of Brown). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claims 1 and 9 have been cancelled and dependent claims 4, 8, and 10 have been rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, these claims are now considered to be allowable. The remaining claims depend from these independent claims and as such are also considered to be allowable.

Conclusion

In view of the above remarks, it is believed that the claims clearly distinguish over the patents relied on by the Examiner either alone or in combination thereof. In view of this, reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of all of the claims is respectfully requested.

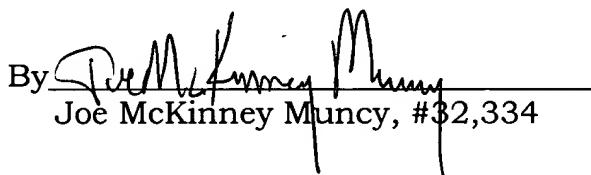
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Robert F. Gnuse (Reg. No. 27,295) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By 
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Attachment(s)